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Press release - Premier's Department

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PRESS RELEASE BY THE PREMIER, MR DUNSTAN.

PREMIER'S DEPARTMENT.

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31.4.74

The Premier, Mr Dunstan, today accused Opposition backbencher, Mr Evans, of distorting the truth so grossly "that it would be laughable were it not so malicious".

Mr Evans claimed that the Premier had 185 personal assistants and the Government was eroding democracy in South Australia.

"Both suggestions - like Mr Evans' earlier attack on the State Film Corporation - are fantasy", Mr Dunstan said.

The figure used by Mr Evans was the number of employees who were paid by the Premier's Department.

This included, among others, weekly paid employees at the Immigration Hostel, the staff of the totally independent Ombudsman, the Planning Appeals Board, the publicity staff of the Tourist Bureau, the Committee Secretariat and the Builders Licensing Board.

"Each of these people has a necessary, often demanding job.

"But by no stretch of the imagination could they be called personal assistants.

"Indeed, to do so, especially of the staff of the Ombudsman whose job is to protect people against bureaucratic injustice, is a slur on the integrity and impartiality of the public service."

"It is true that the staff has expanded considerably since the Premiership of Sir Thomas Playford.

"For a start when he took office there was not even a Premier's Department. There was no Town Planning until Labor took office, there was no Ombudsman, no system of builders licensing.

"The scope of the State Government's operations has expanded to meet people's demands of it.

"My Ministerial staff has expanded by about the same proportion as that made available to the Leader of the Opposition.

"Mr Evans' claim that democracy is being eroded by the shortening of question time in Parliament is equally ludicrous.

"Procedures have been streamlined but the Opposition in South Australia still has more opportunity - quite properly - to scrutinise and question Government policy than any other Parliament in this country," the Premier said.